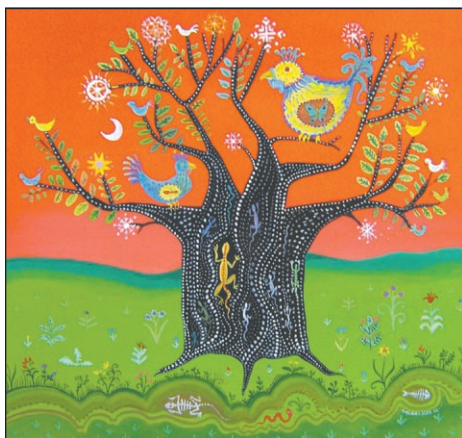


## ABOUT VISUAL ARTISTS

**Barbara Morrison, “Masks and Small Sculpture”**  
Through March, with a reception, 5-8 p.m. March 7 at the  
Artists’ Shop in Missoula  
Artist’s website: [www.morrisondesigns.com](http://www.morrisondesigns.com)



“Tree of Life” by Barbara Morrison

with a degree in English literature. She returned to Montana and began to paint and make textile art. She earned her teaching certification from Rocky Mountain College in 1986 and moved to Missoula a year later, where she continues to make art and show it around the country.

A two-year stay in Beijing, China, inspired her research into different kinds of rapidly vanishing folk art techniques from China and elsewhere in the world.

In addition to the masks and sculpture on display at the Artists’ Shop, Morrison also makes imaginative, brightly colored gouache folk-art paintings and fetish dolls. Her ideas often come from scenes in everyday life and from reading and traveling.

Her work has been displayed in galleries and exhibits across the U.S. and in several other countries; and her fetish dolls have been featured in magazines and in four books about unusual techniques in doll making, and about polymer clay.

**Liisa Nelson, Pottery, Paintings and Drawings**  
Through March, with a reception 5-7 p.m. March 7 and a ceramics workshop March 8 at the Lewistown Art Center  
Artist’s website: [liisanelson.carbonmade.com](http://liisanelson.carbonmade.com)

Liisa Nelson, who is currently artist-in-residence at Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art in Great Falls, specializes in ceramics, but also works in painting, collage, mixed media, and fibers.

“Working with clay and other artistic media is for me a meditation on the strangeness of being alive in the modern world,” writes the artist. “The work conveys a sense of preciousness and perhaps nostalgia, mixed with an admiration for the oddities of nature and the surreal qualities of living in today’s society.”



“The Flier” by Liisa Nelson

and roles as humans in a very complex time and place in the world.”

Her work will also be on display at the Missouri Falls Fine Arts Show and Sale, March 21-22 at the La Quinta Inn, during Western Art Week, along with that of her father, painter Steve Nelson.

**Mary Keefer, “Painting Poetry – A tribute to William Stafford on the celebration of his 100th birthday”**

March 1-April 30, with a reception 6-7:30 p.m. March 14 at the Bozeman Public Library

Mary Keefer, a watermedia painter from Bozeman and a retired Montana State University reference librarian, explores William Stafford’s poem, “Godiva County, Montana,” as part of the library’s Painting Poetry series. Keefer contemplates each phrase of Stafford’s poem and translates his words into her own imagery in 15 acrylic and mixed-media landscape paintings.

Two years ago, Keefer became intrigued with Stafford’s poem and the seeds for this project began to sprout. “I thought it would be terrific to have Montana acknowledge this cherished poet by being one of the locations where tribute is paid to him during the William Stafford Centennial Celebration in 2014,” Keefer said. “Stafford’s poetic language expresses his love of Montana’s beautiful landscape and he encourages all who see and feel it to enjoy it as he did.”

After a conversation with Stafford’s son, Kim, she discovered that “Godiva County, Montana” was one of the last poems he wrote before his death in 1993, and that he wrote it near Big Timber. It reflects the U.S. and Oregon Poet Laureate’s deep affection for Montana: “She’s a

big country. Her undulations/roll and flow in the sun. Those flanks/ quiver when the wind caresses the grass ...”

“The language of the poem is so evocative and joyful for me that I actually paint ideas that spring from those poetic words,” Keefer said in an interview that appears on the Friends of William Stafford Centennial blog, [stafford100.org/centennial-blog](http://stafford100.org/centennial-blog).

“My creative process translates a literary art form into a visual art form,” she adds. “The process is challenging but also exciting because almost any risk is worth taking.”



“Be Alive the land says” by Mary Keefer

**Featured Artist: Ryan Matthew Mitchell**  
Through April 30 at Jest Gallery, Whitefish  
Artist’s website: [www.thenevicaproject.com](http://www.thenevicaproject.com)

“In the end, my work remains simply a way of responding poetically to the world I see and live in,” writes ceramic artist Ryan Mitchell. Art making, he adds, “offers the opportunity to sort out, organize, and make sense of contradictions, articulate them visually and perhaps say something meaningful.”

Mitchell is currently a resident artist at the Red Lodge Clay Center. He recently served as resident artist director at Da Wang Culture Highland, a center for the arts in Shenzhen, China, and was among the first Americans to be an artist-in-residence at the FuLe International Ceramic Art Museums in Xi’An. He has since curated or been featured as an artist in eight exhibitions and arranged for more than 40 international artists to visit and



Butterfly Jar by Ryan Mitchell

create their art in China.

Mitchell received his MFA from The University of Montana in 2005 and spent two years as a resident artist at the Clay Studio of Missoula. Residencies followed at Australia National University in Canberra and at the LH Project in Joseph, OR, and the Northern Clay Center in Minneapolis, where he received the 2010 McKnight mid-career residency fellowship.

He’s had solo exhibitions at Little Street Art Center in Chicago, Plinth Gallery in Denver, the Holter Museum of Art in Helena and Dao Space in Xi’ An China.

While working in Montana, Mitchell has designed and built kilns, instructed ceramic courses and workshops, and shared his passion for the development of ceramics in the West.

He writes, “I stay focused on one simple task of putting ambiguity and paradox between sets of common opposing concepts, like creation and destruction, artifice and artifact, past and present, symbolic and real ...”

**Rabbit Knows Gun, “Kinship of Creation”**

April 1-12, with a reception 2-4 p.m. April 12 at Four Winds Gallery, Emerson Center for Arts and Culture in Bozeman

Rabbit Knows Gun, a military veteran and an enrolled member of the Crow Tribe, resides in Billings. His work is also part of the gallery’s group show, “Native American Art – Past Meets Present,” on display April 1-30.

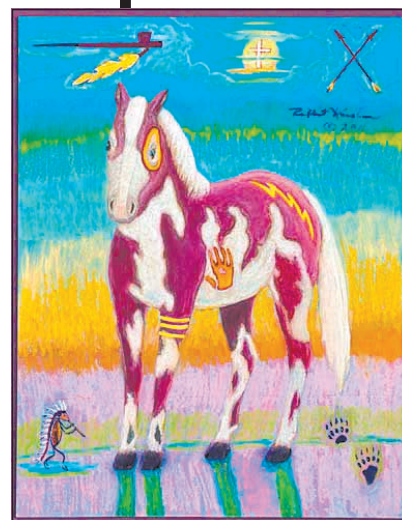
Knows Gun combines Native American religious themes and modern day religious concepts. “As an artist who has been exposed to a multi-faceted, pluralistic society,” says Knows Gun, “I feel that my views on art have evolved with this experience and have given my work greater depth and meaning.”

Known as the “visionary artist of the poor,” his paintings emphasize family, home, patriotism and spirituality. “I have recently begun to appreciate the Greatest Artist of All – God (Akbatia-diah), in Crow, the One who created everything,” he says. “The rest of us can only try to emulate his great work, using the talents and skills which he gives us.”

His paintings involve creative symbolism, and reflect four concurrent themes: traditional Crow and Plains Indian culture; the natural/spiritual environment of sky, landscape and animals; Christian religious spirituality, with an emphasis on evangelical-charismatic Catholic perspectives; and American patriotism as expressed by Native Americans.

The designs and colors he uses are found in traditional Crow art such as beadwork, parfleches, and painted hides, as well as iconography and luminous colors found in historic Catholic paintings and statues.

From Knows Gun’s perspective, his paintings symbolize the power of both native beliefs and Christianity in the minds, hearts and spiritual lives of Native Americans. “The ‘Kinship of Creation’ concept continues to be a hopeful and driving force in my work, giving it an inspirational quality which portrays joy, humility and awe, which I believe are important to the reason I am an artist,” he says.



“Arrow Creek Mustang (Aluntashe)” by Rabbit Knows Gun



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### Send your submissions for About Visual Arts

With About Visual Arts, *State of the Arts* continues to profile living Montana artists (no students, please), whose work is the focus of a current exhibit (on display during some portion of the two months covered by the current issue of *State of the Arts*).

Submissions must include:

- A digital image of the artist’s work, with title of the piece;
- A brief bio and description of the artist’s work (up to 300 words);
- Dates and title of exhibit; and
- The gallery or museum name, town and phone number.

MAC will select submissions that reflect a cross-section of gender, geography, styles and ethnicity, and are from a mix of public and private galleries and museums.

Deadline for submissions for the May/June issue is April 1. Please send submissions to [writus@livelytimes.com](mailto:writus@livelytimes.com) with About Visual Arts in the subject line.